

United Methodist Hospitals Ministry
SNIPPETS OF HEALING

Waiting and Not Knowing

We are always shocked to discover when a loved one is hospitalized for something that was meant to be a fun activity, but later became a potentially fatal health issue. A young man had great fun rafting with his buddies, but accidentally inhaled the toxic blast of some material that affected his respiratory system badly. Within a few months he had breathing difficulty from severely infected lungs. He was airlifted from the local hospital caring for him to a Madison hospital for more specialized care and intervention techniques. The family was not sure how long his treatment would take. His lung infection was severe. The family realized that he might not survive the illness. The chaplain read scripture passages, said prayers with the family and prepared them to hope for the best and to expect the worst. Many stories were shared of the young man, giving emotional and spiritual support to his parents, family members and his buddies gathered while he was struggling for life. The local church and pastor kept a prayer chain going and provided a prayer shawl for the family. ‘Waiting and not knowing’ is a hard place to be in life. All of us will at one time or another go through those dark times. Faith and hope help us when dark times seem impossible to face and too difficult to handle. “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

A Voice from ‘Heaven’

A request came through the hospital’s chaplain for the United Methodist chaplain to visit a patient before her surgery. The chaplain upon receiving the request went to the patient’s room. The chaplain stood quietly waiting outside the patient’s door while the nurse was preparing her for the procedure and asking all the questions she needed to ask. The nurse said, “I see in your chart that you would like to see a chaplain before the surgery. Would you like me to call one of them for you?” Upon hearing this from just outside the patient’s room, the chaplain said in a loud voice, “I am here!” All who were in the room were surprised at hearing the chaplain’s voice...as if it came down from heaven! They were thrilled! It was a Spirit filled moment in a funny way, uplifting the spirit of the patient and easing her anxiety before the procedure. God does speak to us silently and at times aloud. Sometimes it surprises us and can bring comfort too.

Rev. Aaron Alfred, Chaplain - UMHM (2016)

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Forgiveness...Love in Action

One day, the chaplain met a patient who had been poisoned by one of her family members. She was frustrated and upset by what had happened to her in midst of all of the care and love she had given this family member over the years. Through many conversations and many prayers, the patient was willing to forgive the one who did this terrible thing to her. At the same time, she realized that it was also necessary that the police take this person for further intervention and assessment of her mental status, to get help with her financial support and to provide safe custody and sanctuary for the child left behind. The words from the cross “Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing” echoed in the heart and mind of the chaplain. Forgiveness...hard to come by when one is hurt by another...especially by a loved one.

Her Days Are Numbered

The chaplain visited with a patient who was terminally ill with cancer. The doctors told her that more chemo treatment was not going to help her any more. She was middle aged and seemed to be ready to begin the sacred journey of accepting the shorten time ahead saying, “My days are numbered”. The patient shared with the chaplain the contentment of her life lived and the blessings she has received. The partner of the patient was by the bedside, listening to the conversation quietly. The chaplain recognized his presence as well as his noticeable shock to what he was hearing from his partner. The chaplain was able to help the partner to join this holy conversation and to begin to explore what this turn of events would mean for their shortened life together. The couple’s bond seemed to grow stronger in their sharing of their love toward each other. They vowed to share each other’s worries and to live life together thanking God for each other and each day. There was a sense that their faith and trust in God had helped to deeply mold their lives together in marriage.

Rev. Aaron Alfred, Chaplain

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